Information Technology Newsletter

(Division of Communications, State of Nebraska)

The Mission of Information Technology is to serve the citizens of Nebraska by providing premier information technology leadership, policy and operations which facilitate an effective, responsive, and efficient government.

100th Day Update

By Brenda Decker

May 15 marks the 100th day of the reorganization of the IT Divisions of DAS and this newsletter is our first issue of our bi-monthly newsletter to agencies on issues related to the business of our organization. We hope to use this newsletter to convey helpful tips, information about new services, and anything else that appears to provide information to our clients to accomplish their mission. Although you may be looking at a paper copy of this newsletter, please be advised that an internet copy can be obtained from the DOC and/or IMServices homepage. You may want to share this link with other people in your organization.

As we have combined the functions of the Office of the CIO, the IMServices Division, the Division of Communications, and the County Automation Project we have found that we touch every State agency, every County, a large majority of the Cities in Nebraska, and indirectly almost every Nebraskan. Take a look at some of the items we track related to our mission.

Our Help Desk handles over 100 calls per day. The enterprise-computing group processes approximately 1,800 production batch jobs per day and over 2,100 tape mounts per day. On our mainframe disk storage, we had an astronomical 2,216,671,632,422 bytes in use in the month of March. Our CICS transactions average over 56,000,000 per month. The long distance processed by this organization over the past 100 days totaled approximately 2,000,000 calls that consisted of over 5.1 million minutes. We average 4,300 cellular telephones in service each month processing an average of 700,000 minutes of use each month. I could go on, but I think this list gives you a flavor of the scope.

Many projects have been started during our first 100 days. We are currently coordinating a statewide enterprise license agreement (ELA) with IBM for all of State Government. Last year participating agencies saved $282,645 a year with the aggregated contract. With 100% participation this year, we hope to double that number. We are also looking at other enterprise licensing agreements to continue to aggregate our needs and attain larger savings for State agencies. We have initiated a project with State agencies called **shared services**. Through meetings with the State Government Council of the Nebraska Information Technology Commission, we have identified various services that could be consolidated and shared between agencies. We have started exploring an initial 7 services that are being defined, analyzed and implemented in an effort to save the State dollars and provide needed services to our clients. If you would like to see the work being done on these shared services you can go on line at: http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/sgc/workgroups/sharedservices/index.html.

Shortly you will be seeing a survey where we are asking State agencies for an assessment of the various services we provide. With this information we hope to maximize our efficiencies and effectiveness. We have launched and will continue to launch our Basic email product to customers. Initial reports indicate that this Basic email service is providing that needed functionality for agencies that are not interested in the full-blown enterprise product.

Please let me know if there is anything that my team or I can assist you with in fulfilling your mission.

Basic Email

By Dale Hermsen

IMServices is deploying a WEB-based Basic email option for State Agencies. This email system will provide a low-cost option to the Business Class email currently being used by over 11,000 State Staff. Initially we will be converting those users that are using Alltel or NOL as their email provider. The cost for this service will be $2.00 per month per user. This cost is all inclusive, covering license cost, setup, registration, support and backups. You may use a client other then WEB-based (Outlook/Outlook Express) but there may be additional support costs with that client. SPAM and virus protection will be enabled with this product as well.

This email product provides most, if not all, capabilities required for the user that does not need the full functionality of Lotus Notes. The primary difference between this product and Lotus Notes has to do with calendar options in that Basic Mail does not have the capability to do a "free-time" lookup. Users, however, will have the ability to view individual calendars and schedule meetings with other users on Basic Mail. Also, users of this product will not have the ability to invoke the Lotus Notes applications that have been developed for Notes users.

The folder options are similar to other mail products such as Outlook and Lotus Notes. Users will have the ability to create and delete folders to group and manage their messages.

One of the requirements for this system was that it must perform over 56K dial-up. We have performed all of our evaluation tests over a 56K dial-up and found it to be very responsive. The product provides a number of choices of "skins", or graphical presentations that allow the user to select their own personalized display. The skin for the fastest response is the "simple" option.

There are numerous options provided which allow for individual customization. Further information can be obtained from the Nebraska Information Technology Commission website at the following web sites:

http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/standards/groupware/email/emailstandard_20040603.pdf

And

http://www.ims.state.ne.us/webmail/index.html

Questions regarding this service may be directed to the IMS Helpdesk, 471-4636.

Large Scale Storage Refresh

By Tom Conroy

For several months, a small team from Enterprise Computing Services has been working on a plan to refresh the State's large-scale storage infrastructure. We currently support about 2.2 trillion characters of online data storage and about 48,000 tape volumes – a massive amount of data. The storage devices are 2-3 generations old and are ready to be replaced with newer, more capable equipment. The team's task has been to evaluate RFI responses and to create an RFP to acquire the new storage. Ann Ramsey, Fred Lupher, Leon VanSlyke, Keith Schafer, Ed Hively and Bob Keith have spent many hours reviewing information and conducting research to assure that we get the most for our money.

The market for storage is very competitive, so we expect to receive some very attractive proposals from the storage vendors. In addition to taking advantage of the improvements in price for storage, we expect to improve the performance of agency applications that run on our large-scale processors. We will also be able to locate some of the storage in a backup data center to provide disaster recovery capabilities we do not currently enjoy. In addition, we expect improvements in reliability from the new equipment and reduced handling and storage costs for our offsite tapes. Our plans call for installation of the new equipment during fiscal year 2006, so stay tuned for more information. If you have questions as to whether this storage applies to your agency, please contact Tom at 402/471-4348.

Voice Services–Disaster Recovery

By Lana Brox

The voice services section completed the procurement and design of a disaster recovery unit. This unit consists of a phone system with analog station ports, digital station ports, IP capability, cellular and satellite trunking, generators and a UPS that can be deployed anywhere in the State at a moments notice. If central office trunks are available, the system is equipped and configured with 24 trunk ports and a T-1 card if services are available. If no local lines are available, the T-1 can be converted to wireless to connect to an ISP or state network access point. Wireless hops can be used to connect an ISP or state network access point to another location within the State's data network. The majority of the equipment is housed in a wooden case with steel reinforcements, handles and wheels. It's the size of a small refrigerator but completely portable for deployment when needed. It was designed with the idea that anyone at anytime could retrieve the system and have it operational in the midst of a disaster. Manuals are still being completed with diagrams and detailed instructions that anyone can understand. This disaster recovery unit was recently featured in the March 21, 2005 issue of The Telecom Manager's Voice Report. If you have questions, contact Bob Howard at 402/471-3720.

What's Next with Clarity?

By Skip Philson, PMP

Clarity has arrived! So we're done, right? Wrong. We're just starting. Although most of you may not be directly involved in future phases of the Clarity implementation, there is still a lot more to come. When we implemented Clarity at the end of April, we only implemented the functionality that would enable us to perform at the same level we were performing at with Niku, namely time entry and basic project management. These are only small pieces of a much larger, more sophisticated product. The purpose of this article is to provide you with an overview of just some of that functionality.

For those of you who may be unfamiliar with either Clarity or Niku, allow me to provide a brief background. Niku Portfolio Manager (NPM) is the software that IM Services used for time entry and project management. When Niku Corporation announced that it was dropping support for NPM (effective March 2005); we decided to migrate to Niku's newer product called Clarity. NPM used older, client-server based technology. Clarity uses newer WEB-based technology plus it has a bunch (technical term!) more features and functionality, as you are about to discover.

Clarity has eight major modules. They are Portfolio Manager, Project Manager, Open Workbench, Schedule Connect, Resource Planner, Financial Manager, Process Manager, and Clarity Studio. In addition, Clarity has what I will refer to as some additional "features". They are Collaboration, Document Management, and Reporting/Analytics. Actually, because it is totally integrated, we have already implemented the entire product. What we need to do now is to configure the additional functions so that they provide us useful information.

Portfolio Manager is a management tool that enables us to organize, analyze, and report on projects as a group (portfolio). If we want it to, Clarity can report on more than just projects. We can add Assets, Applications, Products, and Other Investments to get a more complete picture of our portfolio. Portfolio Manager is a good strategic analysis tool to determine if projects align with strategic goals, to determine the overall risk of a portfolio, to perform cost/benefit analysis, and to do "what if" strategic planning and modeling.

Project Manager is part of the initial implementation of Clarity. It allows you to set up and maintain projects and tasks from the WEB. You can do almost anything from the Project Manager software that you could do from the Niku Workbench software, except build dependencies and auto schedule projects. It is also from Project Manager that you can link to Open Workbench.

Open Workbench is the new version of Niku Workbench and is the only piece of Clarity that resides on individual PC desktops. It contains all the functionality of the former Niku Workbench plus a couple of added features such as multiple base lining and the ability to expand and collapse individual levels of the Work Breakdown Structure without going into edit mode. Really, unless you are doing heavy duty project scheduling, you should be able to do most of your project management from Project Manager right on the WEB.

Schedule Connect is also part of the initial Clarity implementation. It is the piece of software that allows the WEB-based Clarity to communicate with the PC-based Open Workbench. Schedule Connect is also written to integrate with Microsoft Project (MSP). That means that projects that were originally created in MSP can be loaded directly into the Clarity repository and then read back into (and updated by) MSP without being "converted" to Open Workbench. This can be a big advantage when we are working with vendors who don't have the Open Workbench product.

Resource Planner enables organizations to more easily determine current resource assignments (who is on what projects) and to do a better job of planning for future resource needs. Using Clarity, one thing that we've already determined is that we tend to over-allocate resources to too many projects. In other words, you may be assigned to ten or fifteen different projects each for 40 hours per week even though you may only work 2 or 3 hours per week on an individual project. (Those of you whose timesheets have multiple pages of tasks know exactly what I mean.) By doing a better job of allocating resources to projects, we can then begin to perform true Capacity Planning and more accurate Resource Assignment.

Financial Manager is a very robust accounting module that could allow us to perform billing and invoicing directly to our clients. It could also aid in the cost allocation process, although we will need a much better understanding of its functionality before that could become a reality. One feature of the Financial Manager that we would really like to take advantage of is its multiple rate functionality. This would enable us to apply billing rates to our projects and perform more accurate project costing.

Process Manager is designed to allow us to develop workflows around our projects. Some suggested processes are document approvals, time sheet approvals, and idea approvals. We might also be able to use Process Manager to automate workflows around the project approval and tracking process.

Clarity Studio allows us to tailor the Clarity system and to develop and deploy personalized user interfaces. You will be able (either personally or through the Project Office) to configure your Clarity desktop to include information that is pertinent to you and your job. You will be able to add information about your projects, your reports, charts and graphs, WEB links and even your own photograph to your Clarity desktop.

Some of the other Clarity "features" that I referred to earlier are Collaboration – the ability to have threaded discussions, action items, and automatic notifications; Document Management – the ability to include project-related documents within Clarity; and Reporting/Analytics – the ability to build custom reports and dashboards using an ancillary product called Actuate. In addition, we hope to make Clarity available through the Nebraska Directory Services portal that will ultimately mean a single sign on capability and the ability to access Clarity from the Internet (from home!).

As you can see, Clarity contains a lot of functionality and we have just scratched the surface. We have a lot to learn both about the product and about how to best utilize it at the State. The journey has just started. If you would like more information about Clarity, contact Skip Philson at 402/471-8054.

IT Procurement Reviews

By Steve Schafer

State statute requires the Information Management Services Division to review and approve all IT purchases. What is the purpose of these reviews, and what are the criteria?

Section 81-1117 requires that "No state agency shall hire, purchase, lease, or rent any information management item listed in subsection (a) of this section without the written approval of the information management services administrator." This and similar statutes is the legal authority for the IT procurement reviews. Legislative objectives include finding economies, avoiding unnecessary duplication of information management operations and applications, and adopting minimum technical standards.

The following criteria are used in conducting reviews for equipment, software and services:

- Does the procurement comply with NITC standards and enterprise architecture?
- Does the procurement avoid unnecessary duplication of expenditures?
- Does the procurement address opportunities for collaboration or data sharing, if applicable?
- Does the procurement represent the right technology for the job?
- Does the procurement require skills or resources that exceed the capability of the agency to provide or acquire?

Agencies should provide sufficient information that allows the reviewer to determine what is being purchased, the purpose being served, total cost, and a contact for additional information. This information can be provided as either a text note or an attachment to the header in the accounting system. In addition, the following types of documents are helpful, if available: bill of materiel from the vendor, quotation from the vendor, and a copy of request for proposal.

Routine purchases, such as PCs, laptops, printers, and small dollar items will be reviewed and acted upon within one workday. Procurement requests that are more complex will be reviewed and acted upon within 3 workdays. The action may be a request for clarification or additional information. The goal is to resolve all issues and provide a final action within 10 workdays; excluding the time an agency requires responding to requests for additional information.

Similarly, all telecommunications procurement is statutorily required to go through the Division of Communications. Section 81-1120.19 requires that "The division shall have authority to purchase or lease communications facilities, services or channels on terms which are for the best interests of the State of Nebraska" as well as 81-1120-17, "The division of communications shall have the following duties, powers, and responsibilities: To coordinate the purchase, lease, and use of communications services equipment and facilities for state government;...".

For more information, contact Steve Schafer (402.471.4385 or slschafe@notes.state.ne.us).

Wireless Do-Not-Call List

By Rosemary Kimball - FCC

If you've received an e-mail telling you that your cell phone is about to be assaulted by telemarketing calls as a result of a new cell phone number database, rest assured that this is not the case.

Telemarketing to cell phone numbers has always been illegal in most cases and will continue to be so. In response to recent e-mail campaigns urging consumers to place their cell phone numbers on the National Do Not Call Registry, the Federal Trade Commission and Federal Communications Commission issue this advisory to give consumers the facts.

One e-mail making the rounds says:

> *"JUST A REMINDER...In a few weeks, cell phone numbers are being released to telemarketing companies and you will start to receive sale calls. YOU WILL BE CHARGED FOR THESE CALLS... To prevent this, call the following number from your cell phone: 888/382-1222. It is the National DO NOT CALL list. It will only take a minute of your time. It blocks your number for five (5) years. PASS THIS ON TO ALL YOUR FRIENDS..."*

And another version claims:

> *"The Federal Trade Commission has set up a "do not call" list. It is called a cell phone registry. To be included on the "do not call" list, you must call from the number you wish to register."*

Here's what you need to know about the National Do Not Call Registry program:

1. FCC regulations prohibit telemarketers from using automated dialers to call cell phone numbers. Automated dialers are standard in the industry; so most telemarketers are barred from calling consumers on their cell phones without their consent.

2. The federal government does not maintain a national cell phone registry. Personal cell phone users have always been able to add their numbers to the

National Do Not Call Registry — the same Registry consumers use to register their land lines — either online at www.donotcall.gov or by calling toll-free 1-888-382-1222 from the telephone number they wish to register. Registrations become effective within 31 days of signing up and are active for five years. There is no cut-off date or deadline for registrations.

3. Business-to-business calls are not covered under the Registry.

To learn more about the National Do Not Call Registry and the rules that enforce it, visit the FTC at www.ftc.gov or the FCC at www.fcc.gov . For more information about a planned "wireless 411" directory, visit the website: http://www.qsent.com/wireless411/index.shtml.

Changes in Nebraska State Government Directory

By Renee Bramhall

VM, the mainframe application which houses the information for the white pages for the Nebraska State Government Directory is being discontinued effective June 30, 2005. The information for the Nebraska State Government Directory is now going to be housed through a program in NIS. Beginning July 1, 2005 the Communications Coordinator for each individual State Agency will be responsible for keeping their employees' information up to date with respect to additions, changes, and deletions that should appear in the white pages for the Nebraska State Government Directory. Renee Bramhall has completed visual presentations on the topic and is now in the process of getting information out to all individuals who were unable to attend the presentations.

If you have any questions regarding your employee information, please contact Renee Bramhall at 402/471-4701.

Calling Card Order Forms

By Renee Bramhall

Both a Calling Card Order Form and a Calling Card Cancellation Order Form is now available online. Both order forms can be accessed through http://www.doc.state.ne.us and clicking on Online Order Forms. Renee Bramhall at 402-471-4701 is the contact within the Division of Communications and is happy to assist you will all of your calling card needs.

Alltel Cellular Voicemail

By Erin Schmit

Here is a quick run-down of voicemail setup instructions for Alltel cellular customers:

1. Dial *78 Send.
2. Listen for the tones, then press end.
3. Dial your 10-digit cellular number, then Send.
4. When you hear the voicemail greeting, press #.
5. Dial your password (this is set to 9999 until you set up your own.)

If you have any questions about setting up your cellular voice mail, whether it is Alltel or another company, feel free to contact Erin Schmit at 402/471-6391.

CIO Grant Award

By Ron Bowmaster

The National Governors Association's Center for Best Practices announced the award of a $50,000 competitive grant to the State of Nebraska to develop a Child Abuse and Neglect Data Interchange between Nebraska's Child Abuse and Neglect complaint intake system and at least one law enforcement system. The primary objective of the grant is to ensure that child protection workers and law enforcement personnel receive all of the facts relevant to a request for an investigation into an allegation of child abuse or neglect in a timely manner. The grant specifies that this data exchange must comply with the GLOBAL standard for criminal justice information, and must use XML as the technology to support the interchange. The grant was submitted by, and awarded to, the Office of CIO.

Technical and Business Skills Training

By Jim Pritchard

Our department currently provides training in both of these areas over the Internet. We can provide access to an entire agency or an individual within an agency.

Technical courses for both the desktop user and application developer include the standard Microsoft office (Word, Excel, Access, Powerpoint), Macromedia products including Dreamweaver, JAVA Web development, Crystal Reports, Project Management, Lotus for the everyday user, plus a variety of other topics.

In addition to these technical topics, we have a variety of Web based Business skill training courses. These include Leadership, Management, Team Building, Communications, Human Resources, and Personal Development.

The library consists of 250 Courses that are updated every six months from a master library of 3000 plus courses. The current listing of courses can be viewed at: http://www.ims.state.ne.us/training/courses.htm

We also offer classroom courses on an as requested basis. These instructor-led classes can include training in most technical topics. Our classroom is also available for rental.

Questions regarding training may be directed to Jim Pritchard at 402/471-4997.

Directory Listing Closing Dates:

Sidney 6/09/05
North Platte 7/12/05
Lincoln 7/29/05
Wahoo 6/08/05
O'Neill/Valentine 7/19/05

For more information, contact Renee at 402/471-4701.